

The daily catch

It is late afternoon this autumn day in October. I am visiting the settlement Qassimiut in South Greenland. We have just arrived by boat. The small settlement seems empty. A couple of chained dogs bark. They look bored.

We get a nod of greeting from the few locals. A mini truck crawls at a snail's pace down to the small harbour. Along with a four-wheel transport-motorcycle the truck is the only vehicle in the village.

A local hunter has just returned from the day's shooting in his small boat. The catch is razorbills, which he now cleans. Around him are down, feathers and giblets. The razorbills are prepared to be part of the daily food for the family. The hunter is in company with two local men deep in conversation.

Our job is to inspect the local fish plant to prepare and store the fish catch and the catch of marine animals. We have been lucky with the weather. The

Targa boat brought us through the archipelago and the ice from the neighbour town Narsaq to the small settlement.

Qassimiut is located in the archipelago around 65 kilometres from Narsaq. These waters are usually free of ice from July to April. The field ice flow down along the east coast of Greenland to Cape Farewell and turn north along the west coast. When the field ice arrives, the coastal voyage has to take place with great difficulty in zigzag between ice floes and icebergs of all sizes.

Qassimiut is like most of the other small settlement I Greenland hit by a major population decline. In 1980 the settlement includes 144 inhabitants. Now there are only 24 left.

Walking around in the settlement I get the feeling of desolation. No children's laughter among the houses, no activities at the small harbour. Something extraordinary has to

happen, if this small settlement again should evolve with new residents and new business opportunities.

The fishermen and the hunters along the coast and some of the Qassimiut's own hunters sell some fish and marine animals to the fish plant. The catch includes the fish species, catfish, halibut and cod. The plant also receives minke whale, seals and lumpfish roe.

A local cargo vessel is visiting the village about a fortnight. The vessel connects the towns and the small settlements along the coast. A heliport in the settlement is no longer used for weekly flights.

The negative trend is of course a daily topic of conversation among the last residents of the village, but so far the life goes on, and the hands in the rubber gloves quickly pluck the razorbills and the knife removes the giblets of the birds with a few professional cuts.



Qassimiut, October 2009